Exploring Turkish EFL Students' Writing Anxiety

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ABSTRACT

This study specifically focuses on foreign language writing anxiety in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context in Turkey. The participants of the study are 126 prospective teachers of English attending an ELT department of a state university in Turkey. The aim of the study is to find out the levels and types of foreign language writing anxiety and to determine whether there exists statistically significant differences between freshman and senior students in terms of levels and types of anxiety. The results of the study reveal that 60% (n: 76) of the participants have moderate anxiety about writing in English. The results also indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups in terms of anxiety levels in general and somatic anxiety levels in particular. However, no statistically significant difference has been found between the two groups with regard to avoidance behavior and cognitive anxiety. The findings from the quantitative data have also been confirmed via an open-ended questionnaire. The results of the study are significant in that it may shed light on foreign-language writing anxiety problems and raise awareness of language teachers, syllabus designers, and material developers.

INTRODUCTION

In its simplest form, anxiety is defined as "the feeling of being very worried about something" in the *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English Online*. In the context of foreign or second language learning, anxiety refers to the feeling of being very worried about the new language which is being learnt. This being the case, the relationship between anxiety and language learning has attracted many researchers to conduct anxiety-related studies. For this reason, the influence of anxiety on foreign or second language learning has been on the agenda of scholars for a long time. In the current literature, the effects of anxiety on foreign or second language (L2) learning have been mainly discussed in the contexts of language anxiety in general (Alshahrani, 2016; Aydın, 2008; Ballester, 2015; Liu & Jackson, 2008; Meihua, 2006; Shahi, 2016; Shao, Ji & Yu, 2013; Yim, 2014; Zhang, 2001), anxiety with regard to four language skills (Akkakoson, 2016; Aydın, & Gönen, 2012; Bekleyen, 2009; Hamzaoglu, & Koçoğlu, 2016; Ipek, 2009; Koçak, 2010; Kralova, Skorvagova, Tirpakova, & Markechova, 2017; Mak, 2011; Öztürk, & Gürbüz, 2014; Sanaei, 2015; Subaşı, 2010; Yastibaş, & Yastibaş, 2015; Zhang, &

Rahimi, 2014), testing anxiety (Aydın, 2013; Çağatay, 2015; Delavari & Nourdad, 2017; Marzec-Stawiarska, 2015; Mohamadi, Alishahi, & Soleimani, 2014; Önem, 2014), and anxiety related to some sub-skills like pronunciation (Baran-Lucarz, 2014; Kralova, Skorvagova, Tirpakova, & Markechova, 2017). Most of the studies focus on the issues such as the effects of anxiety on students' achievement, how to cope with language anxiety in general, and some suggested strategies to compensate for the negative effects of anxiety while practicing language skills.

The above-cited studies give a strong hint as to the tendency of research about foreign/second language anxiety in general. As can be understood from them, considerable research has been devoted to general foreign language anxiety; however, less attention has been paid to skill-specific language anxiety in the literature. More specifically, there is scarcity of research about anxiety with regard to writing skill, one of the productive skills, which is known as a demanding process even in one's native language. When it comes to a foreign or second language context, the writing process becomes much more demanding and challenging, which makes students feel more anxious and insecure. According to MacIntyre and Gardner (1994), second language anxiety is "the feeling of tension and apprehension specially associated with second language contexts, including speaking, listening, and writing" (p. 284). If second language anxiety is associated with the feeling of tension and apprehension, it will not be a mistake to state that foreign language anxiety can be associated with more intensive feelings of tension and apprehension.

In the current literature, research with regard to writing anxiety can be grouped under two broad categories. One of the categories constitutes the research examining causes, types, levels, and effects of foreign/second language writing anxiety. The second category focuses on the relationships between writing anxiety and writing achievement based on some variables such as age and gender.

Among the studies in the first category, Rezaei and Jafari's study (2014) investigated the levels, types, and causes of writing anxiety among Iranian EFL students. They found that the students had a high level of cognitive anxiety because of teachers' negative feedback, high expectations, low self-confidence, and lack of adequate linguistic knowledge. The study concluded that a more non-judgmental approach should be adopted in writing courses in Iran by considering learners' needs as well. In another study conducted in an Iranian EFL context, the students' levels of writing anxiety were investigated (Jebreil, Azizifar, Gowhary, & Jamalinesari, 2015). The findings of the study showed that EFL students experienced a high level of writing anxiety in general. They also found that elementary-level students suffered higher level of writing anxiety than intermediate- and advanced-level students. In the study, cognitive anxiety was found to be the most common anxiety type among EFL learners. In a similar study investigating the types and level of anxiety, Min and Rahmat's (2014) focus was on engineering students' writing anxiety. They reported that most of the participants had somatic anxiety. They also found that elementary-level students had a higher level of English writing anxiety than those at intermediate and advanced levels. Likewise, Rahim and Hayas (2014) tried to find out the connection between students' anxiety in writing essay tasks and their choice to do the writing

task. They concluded that students' writing anxieties affect their choice of doing writing tasks in English in a facilitating or debilitating way. Similar to the other studies which have been cited so far, Zhang (2011) measured the level of second language writing anxiety of students. The author also investigated the causes of writing anxiety together with students' perceptions, their preferred learning styles, and the effects of writing anxiety on their writing performances. It was reported in the study that there was a high level of second language writing anxiety among Chinese students, and the cognitive anxiety was the most common type of second language writing anxiety. It was also reported that there was a negative relationship between measure of writing anxiety and performance.

With regard to the second category focusing on the relationships between writing anxiety and writing achievement based on some variables such as age and gender, several findings have been reported. For example, Kurniasih (2017) focused on the relationship between writing performance and writing anxiety. The findings of the study indicated that there was a significant correlation between students' writing anxiety and writing performance. In other words, if students feel nervous, they are likely to produce poor pieces of writing. Negari and Rezaabadi (2012) also tried to find out the relationship between writing anxiety and the writing performance of students. They found that the students' writing grades were higher when they had higher anxiety in all writing-related parts of the final test. The authors also claim that most of the students need some degree of facilitative anxiety and teachers are suggested to be aware of how to deal with anxious students. In another study investigating the relationship between writing anxiety and performance, Hassan (2001) reported that the students with low anxiety wrote better quality compositions than their counterparts with high anxiety, which means writing anxiety negatively affected the quality of students' composition writing. It was also suggested that peer or self-evaluation should be preferred to decrease the level of writing anxiety. The findings of these studies in the second category suggest that there exists a correlation, positive or negative, between writing anxiety and performance; therefore, it is thought that determining the anxiety levels and types of students, as in the case of the current study, and redesigning the writing courses taking students' anxiety levels into consideration can contribute to overall writing performance of students.

The relationship between writing anxiety and learner differences, beliefs, and attitudes can be added as a subcategory to the above-mentioned second category that covers the relationship between writing anxiety and performance. Within this context, some studies in the literature deal with the connection between anxiety and learner-related variables. For example, Cheng (2002) focused on relationships between students' perceptions with regard to second language writing anxiety and learner differences. The author reported that enhancing students' perception of writing competence was as important as fostering their writing skills. The study also revealed that L2 writing anxiety is quite different from L1 writing anxiety. Likewise, Ho (2016) investigated writing anxiety and self-efficacy beliefs among EFL graduate students. It was reported in the study that insufficient writing skills in English, time constraints, and fear of negative comments could be mentioned as sources of anxiety. Another conclusion of the study was that senior doctoral students were found to be more successful than their junior counterparts while writing research papers. As the findings of these studies reveal, the relationship between

writing anxiety and learner-related issues such as their perceptions, beliefs, and differences also confirms the necessity of exploring students' foreign language writing anxiety, which constitutes the main aim of the current study.

Apart from the above-mentioned two main categories about the research in foreign language writing, there are some other studies in the literature suggesting some classroom applications and remedies for reducing writing anxiety in foreign language classes. For instance, Tsiriotakis, Vassilaki, Spantidakis, and Stavrou (2017) investigated the possible effects of an instructional model on students' writing anxiety. The findings of the study validated that foreign language learning was negatively influenced by foreign language writing anxiety. It was suggested that teachers should create facilitative writing environments to lower the anxiety level of the students. Similarly, Scullin and Baron's (2013) research sought to minimize foreign language writing anxiety through encouraging learners to keep freewriting notebooks. The authors reported that the students felt more comfortable and appreciated that they were not constantly critiqued. These two studies dealing with how to reduce the effect of anxiety on students also provide some valuable insights into the need for determining the levels and types of anxiety that students experience.

In accordance with the context of the present study, there is limited number of studies conducted in the Turkish EFL context in the literature. To give an example, Atay and Kurt (2006) carried out a study to explore the writing anxiety of prospective teachers of English. They reported that more than half of the participants had high or average writing anxiety. It was also concluded that the prospective teachers who have average or high writing anxiety had some difficulties in terms of organization and production of ideas while writing in English. The students stated that their future teaching practices might be affected from previous writing experiences as well. In another study, Kara (2013) focused on the reasons of second language writing anxiety. The author reported that the students had writing anxiety due to the lack of adequate writing practice, experience, necessary strategy knowledge, inefficient coursebooks, and poor feedback. Moreover, Kırmızı and Kırmızı (2015) conducted some research in Turkish EFL context and found out that the participants had moderate and high levels of writing self-efficacy based on different variables. In addition, they reported that the subject group had moderate levels of writing anxiety and the main causes of anxiety were determined as time-related issues and teachers' negative evaluation. These studies conducted in a Turkish EFL context, though relatively few in number, have significant findings regarding the types, levels, causes, and sources of foreign language writing anxiety. These studies also indicate that much more research focusing on writing anxiety is needed to understand the depth and breadth of the issue. In addition, as will be discussed later, these studies yielded similar results to the present study's findings, but the current study differs from them in that it provides a comparative overview of the issue involved.

As the studies which have been cited so far representing different research dimensions in the literature make clear, writing anxiety-related issues have been of great concern to language researchers all over the world. However, such an important issue has not been adequately searched and discussed in a Turkish EFL context. To the best of our knowledge, there are few

studies specifically reporting foreign language writing anxiety in a Turkish EFL context in the literature. For this reason this study, with its pure EFL context and comparative overview, investigates the writing anxiety of prospective English language teachers in a state university in Turkey. The results of the study are significant in that it may shed light on foreign-language writing anxiety problems and raise awareness of language teachers, syllabus designers, teacher educators, and material developers. Moreover, the findings of the study can be used as the rationale for redesigning writing courses in foreign language teacher education programs in Turkey. Bearing all these in mind, we will try to find answers to the following research questions in the study based on both qualitative and quantitative data:

1. What types and levels of Foreign Language Writing Anxiety (FLWA) do prospective teachers of English experience?
2. Are there any differences between freshman and senior students in terms of types and levels of FLWA they experience?
3. What are the reasons and sources of FLWA of prospective teachers of English?
4. Do the reasons and sources of FLWA change by grade?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

The participants of the study were 126 prospective teachers of English, 22 males and 104 females, attending an ELT department of a state university in Turkey. The sample consisted of 71 freshman and 55 senior students. Their ages ranged from 18 to 25 when the study was conducted. A great majority of the participants (n: 105) attended one-year compulsory preparatory class before enrolling in the department. Some of the participants (n: 8) passed the proficiency exam offered by the university at the beginning of the semester and directly started the department. Some of the students (n: 13) came to the department through undergraduate transfer.

The ELT department offers students basic language skills courses in the first year such as Contextual Grammar I-II, Advanced Reading and Writing I-II, Listening and Pronunciation I-II, Oral Communication Skills I-II, Lexical Competence I-II, and so on. The department also offers field-specific courses in the following three years (e.g., Approaches to ELT I-II, ELT Methodology I-II, Teaching English to Young Learners I-II, Teaching Language Skills I-II, Linguistics I-II, Language Acquisition). Students are expected to write various types of well-developed essays only in Advanced Reading and Writing courses. However, the other courses in the department require students to prepare written tasks, projects, and presentations. The midterm and final exams also require them to write in English. In other words, the students are expected to write well for the tasks and exams during all semesters in order to be successful.

Instruments

In order to determine the types, levels, and sources of foreign language writing anxiety, two main instruments were employed in the study. The first instrument was Second Language Writing Anxiety Inventory (SLWAI) developed by Cheng (2004). The researcher who developed the scale stated that the inventory could be applicable to foreign language context as well. She also studied with the participants in an EFL context while developing the scale. The inventory had a multidimensional approach and three subscales which were analyzed and proved to be highly reliable and valid. Cheng stated that "The multidimensional nature of the SLWAI makes it possible to investigate the relationships between different facets of L2 writing anxiety and aspects of writing performance and practices, using the three subscales" (p. 331). Three subscales in SLWAI are *somatic anxiety, avoidance behaviour*, and *cognitive anxiety*. Somatic anxiety refers to physiological effects of anxiety a person experiences such as nervousness, tension, and trembling. Avoidance behaviour is the term which can be explained as refusal of writing or resistance to write. Cognitive anxiety is related to the mental aspect of anxiety such as "negative expectations, preoccupation with performance, and concern about others' perceptions" (Cheng, 2004, p. 316).

The SLWAI consists of 22 items with three subscales. The first subscale is *somatic anxiety* (items 2,6,8,11,13,15,19) with seven items; the second one is *avoidance behaviour* with seven items (4,5,10,12,16,18,22); and the last one is *cognitive anxiety* with eight items (1,3,7,9,14,17,20,21). Seven items (1,4,7,17,18,21,22) also require reverse coding in the inventory. The SLWAI was scored on a 5-point Likert scale that offered five options; *1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (uncertain), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree)*. For the whole scale, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was found to be 0.84, which indicates a satisfactory reliability. The second instrument employed in the study was an open-ended questionnaire which mainly aimed to find out the reasons, sources, and self-reports of the anxiety the students experienced. The questionnaire had four open-ended questions in which the students were expected to write sincerely what they thought about foreign language writing.

Data Collection and Analyses

Data were collected in the spring semester of 2016-2017 academic year from freshman and senior students in an ELT department of a state university in Turkey. First, the participants were given SLWAI and they were asked to respond to 22 items from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." Then, they were expected to answer four open-ended questions without time constraint. They were also told that they could answer in Turkish if they felt more secure in terms of expressing themselves clearly. The collected data were first entered into an Excel document and then transferred to the SPSS package program. Data obtained from the open-ended questionnaire were analyzed through content analysis and pattern coding.

RESULTS

Findings with regard to the types and levels of anxiety prospective teachers of English experience are presented in this part in accordance with the first research question *"What types and levels of FLWA do prospective teachers of English experience?"* The level of FLWA of the participants was determined, as in the study of Atay and Kurt (2006), by calculating the mean score of the scale. The scale has 22 items and the mean score can range from 22 to 110. Therefore, the participants having a total score lower than or equal to 58 were described as having low anxiety, those having a total score higher than or equal to 83 as having high anxiety, and the ones who have a total score between 58 and 83 were considered to have moderate anxiety. In line with this calculation method, the preliminary findings of FLWA reveal that 60% of the prospective teachers of English have moderate anxiety, 35% have low anxiety, and only 5% have high anxiety. Table 1 below indicates the number and mean scores of the participants.

Table 1. *Levels of FLWA of Prospective Teachers of English*

Level	n	Mean	Percentage
Low Anxiety	44	51.72	35
Moderate Anxiety	76	70.48	60
High Anxiety	6	85.5	5
Total	126	64.65	100

As Table 1 shows, the mean score of FLWA for all participants was found to be 64.65, which indicates that the prospective teachers of English have moderate anxiety. As for the types of FLWA, the participants have mainly somatic anxiety, cognitive anxiety, and avoidance behavior, respectively. The following Table 2 shows the types of anxiety freshman and senior students' experience.

Table 2. *Types of FLWA of Prospective Teachers of English*

Level (n: 126)	Freshman (mean)	Senior (mean)	All (mean)
Somatic Anxiety	3.27	2.94	3.13
Avoidance Behaviour	2.86	2.80	2.84
Cognitive Anxiety	2.94	2.73	2.85

The mean scores of freshman students in all types of anxiety were found to be higher than senior students'. However, the highest difference between freshmen and senior students was

in somatic anxiety, which can be regarded as a remarkable finding with regard to the types of FLWA among the participants.

In order to answer the second research question "*Are there any differences between freshman and senior students in terms of types and levels of FLWA they experience?*" independent samples t-test was conducted. T-test results reveal that there is a statistically significant difference between anxiety types of freshman and senior students. Table 3 shows the related data below;

Table 3. *T-test Results for FLWA of Prospective Teachers of English*

Grade	n	Mean	t	p*
Freshman	71	66.59	2.174	.032
Senior		55	62.15	

*p<.05

As shown in Table 3, the mean scores of freshman students were higher than those of senior students. This indicates that freshman students were more anxious than senior students in terms of foreign language writing. Table 3 above indicates the overall anxiety mean scores; however, it is also important to determine the differences among the types of anxiety of the participants. To this end, t-test was utilized to find the difference between the groups in terms of the types of anxiety. Table 4 is related to the dimension of somatic anxiety of the participants.

Table 4. *T-test Results for Freshman (F) and Senior (S) Students' Somatic Anxiety Levels*

ITEMS	Grade	n	Mean	t	P*
2. I feel my heart pounding when I write English compositions under time constraint.	F	71	3.54	3.001	.003
	S	55	2.98		
6. My mind often goes blank when I start to work on an English composition.	F	71	3.06	2.151	.033
	S	55	2.64		
8. I tremble or perspire when I write English compositions under time pressure.	F	71	3.42	.614	.540
	S	55	3.31		
11. My thoughts become jumbled when I write English compositions under time constraint.	F	71	3.35	.514	.608
	S	55	3.25		
13. I often feel panic when I write English compositions under time constraint.	F	71	3.61	3.052	.003
	S	55	2.95		

15. I freeze up when unexpectedly asked to write English compositions.	F	71	3.23	2.123	0.36
	S	55	2.78		
19. I usually feel my whole body rigid and tense when I write English compositions.	F	71	2.75	.203	.840
	S	55	2.71		
Total	F	71	22.94	2.539	.012
	S	55	20.61		

*p<.05

As indicated in Table 4 above, there is a statistically significant difference between freshman and senior students' somatic anxiety levels. Freshman students have higher level of somatic anxiety than senior students. When the related items were analyzed, it can be stated that the statistically significant difference exists in the items 2, 6, 13, and 15. Compared to senior students, freshman students feel more anxious and panic while writing under time constraint and when asked to write unexpectedly.

With regard to avoidance behaviour, which constitutes another dimension of the scale, t-test results reveal that there is not a significant difference between the two groups. This means that the two groups show similar avoidance behavior as to foreign language writing.

Table 5. *T-test Results for Freshman (F) and Senior (S) Students' Avoidance Behaviour Levels*

ITEMS	Grade	n	Mean	t	P*
4. I often choose to write down my thoughts in English.	F	71	2.69	-.682	.496
	S	55	2.82		
5. I usually do my best to avoid writing English compositions.	F	71	2.63	-.700	.485
	S	55	2.78		
10. I do my best to avoid situations in which I have to write in English.	F	71	2.89	.261	.795
	S	55	2.84		
12. Unless I have no choice, I would not use English to write composition.	F	71	2.97	1.314	.191
	S	55	2.69		
16. I would do my best to excuse myself if asked to write English compositions.	F	71	2.94	2.780	.006
	S	55	2.40		

ITEMS	Grade	n	Mean	t	P*
18. I usually seek every possible chance to write English compositions outside of class.	F	71	3.00	-.384	.701
	S	55	3.07		
22. Whenever possible, I would use English to write compositions.	F	71	2.96	-.321	.748
	S	55	3.02		
Total	F	71	20.08	643	.522
	S	55	19.61		

*p<.05

When the items are examined, it can be inferred that most of the students in both groups have a slight resistance to writing in English. This resistance constitutes the avoidance behavior which is the other dimension of FLWA. The mean scores suggest that both groups of students have a tendency to refuse to write in English when asked to write or use English to write compositions outside the class.

Table 6 below is related to cognitive anxiety levels of freshman and senior students. As in the case of the avoidance-behavior dimension, the overall cognitive anxiety levels of both groups do not yield statistically significant differences. However, items 1 and 7 in this dimension show that the two groups differ in terms of cognitive aspect of foreign language writing.

Table 6. *T-test Results for Freshman (F) and Senior (S) Students' Cognitive Anxiety Levels*

ITEMS	Grade	n	Mean	t	P*
1. While writing in English, I'm not nervous at all.	F	71	2.83	2.886	.005
	S	55	2.31		
3. While writing English compositions, I feel worried and uneasy if I know they will be evaluated.	F	71	3.28	-.237	.813
	S	55	3.33		
7. I don't worry that my English compositions are a lot worse than others'.	F	71	3.03	2.686	.008
	S	55	2.53		
9. If my English composition is to be evaluated, I would worry about getting a very poor grade.	F	71	3.42	1.149	.253
	S	55	3.20		
14. I'm afraid that other students would deride my English composition if they read it.	F	71	2.52	-.630	.530
	S	55	2.64		

17. I don't worry at all about what other people would think of my English compositions.	F	71	2.66	1.229	.221
	S	55	2.42		
20. I'm afraid of my English composition being chosen as a sample to be discussed in class.	F	71	2.79	.471	.638
	S	55	2.69		
21. I'm not afraid at all that my English compositions would be rated as very poor.	F	71	3.03	1.184	.239
	S	55	2.80		
Total	F	71	23.56	1.859	.065
	S	55	21.90		

*p<.05

As Table 6 shows, freshman students feel more nervous than senior students while writing in English. In addition, both groups of students are anxious about being evaluated and getting poor grade from writing exams or assignments.

The quantitative data regarding the types and levels of FLWA of prospective teachers of English have been presented so far. As for the qualitative dimension of the research, four open-ended questions were addressed to the participants. Written responses of the participants were analyzed through content analysis and pattern coding. The third and fourth research questions are about the reasons and sources of FLWA and whether these reasons and sources change by grade respectively. The responses to these questions are expected to triangulate the data obtained from the scale. The findings from the content analyses and pattern coding are presented in the following section of the research.

Open-ended Question 1: How do you feel while writing a paragraph in English?

Almost all of the students who were given the FLWA questionnaire responded to the open-ended questions. The responses given to the first question regarding the participants' feeling about writing in English can be categorized under two main headings as positive responses and negative responses. Freshman students' responses were more pessimistic compared to their senior counterparts. They described their feelings during writing a paragraph in English with the words such as nervous, worried, excited, confused, stressful, and bored. They also expressed that they had fear of making mistakes and they felt uncomfortable under time-constraint. Freshman students' responses as to their feelings about writing in English can be categorized under three sub-headings:

a) Positive attitudes towards writing

b) Topic-related anxiety

c) Time-related anxiety

Positive attitudes towards writing in English were expressed by some freshman students, stating that writing can be enjoyable and they feel relaxed if the topic is familiar to them. Most of the students complained about unfamiliar topics and time limitations. On the other hand, senior students displayed more moderate attitude towards writing in English than freshmen. They only complained about time-constraint. They expressed that unfamiliar topics and time-constraint made them feel more anxious. Some examples from students' responses are presented below:

- *Generally, I feel nervous while writing because of time. There is limited time to write essay in exams (senior).*
- *I don't feel anxious or nervous generally. If it is given unexpectedly, I may feel a little bit anxious from time to time (senior).*
- *I usually become stressful about what to write. I feel like my mind stopped. I always think 'If I can't write now, what will I do in the exam?', so it makes me anxious all the time. On the other hand, if subject is something that I am interested in, it really makes me amuse (freshman).*
- *I sometimes feel anxious because I have to hand in on time. I don't want to feel humiliated in front of the class. Sometimes I love writing a paragraph because the topic of the paragraph attracts me and I want to finish it at once (freshman).*

Given the findings obtained from the first open-ended question, the responses of senior students especially contradict the results of SLWAI to an extent. The results of SLWAI indicate that senior students experience primarily somatic anxiety; however, their responses in the open-ended questionnaire do not confirm this. In addition, although senior students' avoidance behaviour and cognitive anxiety levels seem to be low in SLWAI, their responses indicate that they experience these anxiety types to some extent as well. This may be because of the fact that they feel more secure expressing themselves in an open-ended questionnaire which enables the researcher to get in-depth data. Therefore, it is suggested that this mismatch need to be searched in future research.

Open-ended Question 2: Describe the paragraph writing process in a foreign language with three adjectives.

With regard to the paragraph writing process, freshman and senior students preferred similar adjectives to describe it. However, it was found that freshman students used more negative adjectives than senior ones. The most frequently used adjectives by freshman students were *boring, difficult, complex*, and *challenging* while senior students preferred *anxious, time-consuming*, and *boring*. As for the positive adjectives used the most frequently, freshman students used *exciting, enjoyable, entertaining*, and *motivating*. Senior students used *relaxing, informative, funny*, and *impressive* for paragraph writing process in English.

It is possible to realize the contradictory findings of two questionnaires, as in the first open-ended question. A considerable amount of senior students preferred the adjective 'anxious'

to describe the paragraph writing process in a foreign language. This is also not reflected in the findings of SLWAI. On the other hand, freshman students' responses usually were identical with the responses they gave in the open-ended questionnaire.

Open-ended Question 3: State the difficulties you experience in the course of paragraph writing in English.

Among the difficulties freshman students experience during paragraph writing process, vocabulary choice, fear of making mistakes, creating a topic sentence, time limitation, and concentration problems were the most frequently reported ones. On the other hand, senior students mentioned the difficulties such as limited knowledge about the writing topic, academic words selection, cohesion, coherence, and outlining. Some examples are as follows:

- *While writing a paragraph, words can be a big problem. I have to choose appropriate academic words to write well-developed paragraphs. I must be more careful about grammar. Sometimes nothing comes to my mind due to the topic. I think there should not be limitation about topic. Due to this problem, it takes hours to write (senior).*
- *I can't find the words I need. I have difficulty in expressing myself (freshman).*
- *Though I know the process, I can't express my thoughts because of limited knowledge or structures (senior).*
- *I always feel uncomfortable, because I am never sure about the correct words and phrases while writing. That's why I can't write what I want freely (freshman).*

Open-ended Question 4: Do you think having a good competence in writing in English will help you with your future career?

This last open-ended question about students' opinions regarding the importance of writing yielded interesting findings. A great majority of senior students reported that having a good competence of writing would help them apply for a job and start an academic career. Few students stated that writing competence would not help them at all in their future career. However, freshman students stated that having a good competence in writing will help them be a good teacher of English, improve other skills, have scholarships, and run projects in the future. It can be inferred from these findings that senior students were aware of the critical importance of having a good competence of writing in a foreign language on the verge of their graduation. They reported that writing in English would really help them find a good job and pursue an academic career. However, freshman students regarded writing as just a skill similar to other language skills to be improved for more specific objectives such as getting scholarships, writing projects, and passing exams. For example:

- *Yes, absolutely. If I am good at writing, the other skills will also be influenced positively (freshman).*
- *Yes of course, when you apply for a scholarship or Erasmus program, your good*

competence of writing will definitely help you (freshman).
- *Yes, it will help my academic career in the future (senior).*
- *No doubt to that it will help in numerous ways, e.g. applying for a job, writing a CV, a letter of motivation, and getting acceptance for MA programs, and so on (senior).*

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The primary aim of the study is to determine the types and levels of foreign language writing anxiety of prospective teachers of English at a state university in Turkey. The other aim is to find out whether there is a significant difference between freshman and senior students with regard to the levels and types of anxiety. In addition, the study aims to answer the question whether the grade has an effect on anxiety or not. The participants of the study were 126 prospective teachers of English, 22 males and 104 females, attending an ELT department of a state university in Turkey.

The results of the study reveal that 60% *(n: 76)* of the participants have moderate anxiety about writing in English. This result is identical with Atay and Kurt (2006), Kara (2013), and Kırmızı and Kırmızı's (2015) studies. More than half of the participants in these studies conducted in Turkey have moderate or higher anxiety levels. As for the types of anxiety, the participants of the study mainly have somatic anxiety, which means that the participants show physiological symptoms in the course of a writing task such as nervousness, sweat, and tension. This result is similar to what Min and Rahmat (2014) found in their study.

The present study also aims to find out the differences between anxiety types of freshman and senior students. The result indicates that there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups in terms of anxiety levels in general. Freshman students have been found to be more anxious than senior students. This result is quite normal since senior students have experienced numerous writing tasks, projects, exams, and so on during four years. It can be inferred that anxiety can decrease by grade because of more experience and probably more proficient learners in English. In other words, getting experience and becoming more proficient in foreign language writing may decrease overall anxiety levels. The study also reveals that there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups in terms of somatic anxiety levels in particular. Freshman students are more anxious than senior counterparts in terms of somatic anxiety. This means that freshman students show physical symptoms of writing anxiety more than senior ones. That senior students experience such symptoms as heart pounding, feeling panic, tension, and nervousness less compared to freshman ones can be attributed to probable self-confidence and feeling more secure in terms of expressing themselves in English.

No statistically significant difference has been found between the two groups with regard to the other two types of anxiety, namely avoidance behaviour and cognitive anxiety. Avoidance behaviour is the second dimension of the FLWAS in which students show resistance to write or refuse to write in foreign language. Although the analyses have not yielded a

significant difference between the groups, the mean scores suggest that the participants have given higher points to almost all of the related items. This means that both freshman and senior students have a tendency to resist writing in English. This unwillingness to write in English has been more obvious for senior students upon the analyses of some items in the related scale. For example, contrary to what is expected from senior students who have experienced several writing tasks, projects, and exams during their training, the mean scores of senior students in the items 5, 18, and 22, which are related to using English to write paragraphs and compositions in English, have been found to be higher. This finding is important since it means that senior students are not eager to write and they do not have enough motivation and self-confidence to write in English. They were supposed to become the teachers of English a few months after the study was conducted, and they still experienced some sort of anxiety which may affect their teaching in a way as a role model in the classroom.

The same findings have been obtained from the cognitive anxiety dimension in the scale. Total mean scores have not yielded significant difference between the groups; however, the mean scores of senior students have been higher than expected as in the case of the avoidance-behavior dimension. Cognitive anxiety is related to being worried about others' perceptions, negative expectations, and having prejudices against writing in a foreign language. The participants' responses in both groups in the related dimension of the scale have shown that both freshman and senior students have some negative expectations, prejudices, and worries about writing in English. Most of these findings have been confirmed with the open-ended questionnaire asking students' perceptions about writing in English. However, the responses of senior students in the open-ended questionnaire yielded some contradictory findings compared to what they stated in SLWAI. Fear of making mistakes, unfamiliar writing topics, and having difficulty in the choice of appropriate vocabulary, which have been determined as the sources or reasons of foreign language writing anxiety of prospective teachers of English, can be regarded as indicators of the existence of avoidance behavior or cognitive anxiety among the participants.

All in all, the study revealed that prospective teachers of English have moderate levels and different sorts of anxiety. In addition, there exists a significant difference between freshman and senior students' overall anxiety levels. Different dimensions of the scale suggest some important differences to the detriment of senior students. With regard to the findings about the senior students, it can be stated that the level, types, and sources of anxiety they experience are more different than expected. For this reason, it is highly recommended that foreign language teacher education programs need to be revised in Turkey in terms of integrating some crucial writing courses into the current curricula in order for students to develop their writing skills and become self-confident writers and teachers of English.

Last but not least, more studies suggesting solutions for foreign language writing anxiety should be conducted in the Turkish EFL context to consider the overall anxiety levels of students. It is suggested that language teachers, teacher educators, syllabus designers, and material developers should be aware of the existence of foreign language writing anxiety and take action in accordance with the research findings regarding this issue.

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